

How can I get my client prospect to read my emails? Part 1

Posted by Robin Hensley on October 26, 2010

A client told me recently about a very detailed email he had sent to a prospective client. He already had that person's attention and was on the brink of setting a time to meet when he felt he should expand on his background—just to be sure his target understood all that he had to offer. He wrote several paragraphs filled with details and explanations of how he had successfully achieved many important results. He told me about it because he couldn't understand why he never received a reply. The target had gone dark. His situation reminded me of the importance of understanding how email works and how it is different from paper communication.

First, let's talk about what e-mail is and what it is not. E-mail is not the same as hard copy, according to [Dawn-Michelle Baude, Ph.D.](#) and author of *The Executive Guide To E-Mail Correspondence*. Dr. Baude explains the differences this way:

- 1. E-mail is designed to move or transact information as rapidly as possible, from the writer to the reader.** It usually produces immediate action, often in the form of another e-mail. Hard copy, on the other hand, is designed for contemplation over time and does not necessarily move the reader to act. E-mail is a transaction; hard copy is a reflection.
- 2. Unlike hard copy, e-mail is more than rectangular.** It appears in a window, with clearly defined edges. These edges focus reading in a way that is very different from the way we read hard copy. The edge of a piece of paper is not so insistent. It's easier for the eye to lift, to wander, to reflect.
- 3. E-mail is boxed-in with multiple frames that relentlessly focus the eye on the text.** Rigid borders confine the gaze and keep it on the words. The trapped-in quality of the text affects our expectation about the purpose and intent of reading. When we look at an e-mail message, we expect to receive information, right away. We get frustrated when we don't get it.

Why is it important to see the e-mail page differently from hard copy? If you understand how e-mail information is seen and processed at a conscious and sub-conscious level, you can use that knowledge to create messages that are more likely to be read and acted upon. We'll talk more about this in next week's post. For now, just be aware that email communication is different and keep that in mind as you use it.

Until next time,

Robin